Rosie Creek Forestry Road & Recreation Partnership

December 2019

Alison Arians
Alaska Division of Forestry
Board of Forestry initiates forestry road and recreation partnership

- Chris Beck’s presentation on the Alaska Trails Initiative sparked interest in BOF’s own project.
- Make the pie bigger: economic advantages of recreation, the “sleeping giant.”
- Recreation advocates and forestry managers are often at odds, since timber harvest can disrupt recreational patterns.
- Timber harvest roads provide access: a valuable asset to recreationists like mountain bikers, skiers, snowmachiners, dog mushers, etc.
- Partnerships like this have been done in Oregon and New Zealand: working forest and recreational trails together.
- Where should BOF initiate a pilot project?
Rosie Creek Unit:
Tanana Valley State Forest

- Jeremy Douse, Fairbanks/Delta Area Forester recommended Rosie Creek: Unit 5B within TVSF.
- Harvest and reforestation has been completed for the next 30 years.
- Recreationists already use the area for cross-country skiing, mountain biking, hunting, ATV riding, snowmachining, running, dog mushing, etc.
- Beautiful views of the Tanana Valley and Alaska Range.
- Rosie Creek encompasses several interesting features:
  - Rosie Creek fire
  - Forest management
  - Non-native plantations
Rosie Creek Fire, Plantations & Timber harvests
Rosie Creek Ramble tour scheduled for December 1

by Touring Coordinator | Nov 24, 2019 | Touring |

The first NSCF tour of the season kicks off on December 1 with the Rosie Creek Ramble! Details below:

• When: Sunday, December 1, 2019
• Start time and place: 11am, Rosie Creek Trail (see directions below)
• Estimated tour time: 1.5 to 2 hours
• Description: A mellow 4-mile ski on the Rosie Creek trails. Beginners very welcome as is anyone who would like an introduction to the huge system of unmaintained ski trails out there. The trail crosses a small beaver pond, then gently climbs up a ridge into warmer temperatures. After following the ridge for nearly a mile, it loops back down to where we started. No cancellation temperature.
• Directions to start: We will meet at a small pull off on the side of Rosie Creek Trail. To get there, take the Parks Highway to Cripple Creek and drive down it until it becomes a dirt road. The next right is Rosie Creek, and the pull off is a little over a mile down. I’ll be there in a red pickup truck with a friendly white dog who loves company. (In other words, Dogs allowed.)
• Leader: Steven Hansen, slevenseanhansen(at)gmail.com, 799-5027

Example of current uses: Ski tour planned
What recreational improvements needed?

- Directional signs. Easy to get lost!
- Signs about forest management & land ownership
  - Tanana Valley State Forest
  - Mental Health
  - Fairbanks North Star Borough
- Road maintenance: erosion when DOF not actively managing timber.
- Interpretive signs: Rosie Creek Fire, plantations, and forest management.
Who will pay for improvements?

- Division of Forestry doesn’t have the funds for the project.
- Recreation partnership is not core mission.
- Few staff to work on project.
RTP Grant for public agencies or non-profits.

Stipulation 1 projects only:

- 2. Rehabilitation contained within the footprints of existing trails and trailhead facilities, including resurfacing or improving the trail facility surfaces;
- 3. Regrading within the footprint of existing trail and/or parking areas;
- 5. Development and distribution of educational materials;
- 7. New installation of signs, kiosks and markers at, and along, existing facilities;
Press release issued October 1st for a public meeting, public notice posted online and around Fairbanks.

October 14th public meeting held at the Potter Road Fire Hall, in the Rosie Creek subdivision.

40 people attended, no objections. Agency comments: MHT, FNSB.

Comments refined project. Priorities:
- Road & parking lot/trailhead maintenance for long term
- Directional signs
- Map kiosk
- Link to online GPS map
- No interpretive panels needed now. (Proposed parking area informal shooting range.)
Public meeting: Potter Road Fire Hall, in Rosie Creek Subdivision. 40 attendees with great ideas.
Proposed recreational improvements:

- regrading and resurfacing an 18-mile system of existing forestry roads to reduce ruts and erosion;
- clearing brush from portions of existing forestry roads;
- regrading a portion of a material site on the Parks Highway to provide parking at the trailhead, and removing junk cars and other garbage from the site;
- constructing and installing a map kiosk near the trailhead to detail the forestry road system and explain land ownership and timber management in this working forest;
- installing signs to
  - indicate directions to stay on the maintained route,
  - inform users of seasonal trail conditions that branch off from the road system, and
  - inform users when they enter and leave State Forest land, and what restrictions exist on adjacent land ownerships (such as Mental Health Trust and Fairbanks North Star Borough); and
- provide a link to a downloadable GPS map on TrailForks.com.
A clear chilly day in the field. These roads have lots of potential for recreational use.
A nifty map kiosk like this near the trailhead hopefully won’t get riddled with bullets.
No getting lost with signs and “You Are Here” maps like these along the road system!
Some erosion present on the forestry roads in steeper sections.
Informal shooting range in material site
Board of Forestry field tour next summer?
Rosie Creek grant proposal: Reasons for optimism

- $100,000 for projects that include motorized access: historically, not many applications.
- TVSF Management Plan endorses recreational use.
- Resolution of support from Fairbanks North Star Borough Assembly.
- Letters of support from:
  - Board of Forestry
  - Tanana Valley State Forest Citizens Advisory Committee
  - FNSB Trails Advisory Commission
  - Explore Fairbanks
  - State Parks Northern Region Citizens Advisory Board
- Partnering with Interior Alaska Trails and Parks Foundation.
- Road system only 20 minutes from downtown Fairbanks.
Project solves some problems:

- Conflict between recreation advocates and forestry managers: timber harvest can disrupt recreational patterns.
- Timber harvest roads can provide access for recreation. Adding recreational improvements:
  - encourages recreationists to use forestry roads,
  - educates them about the working forest,
  - fosters a better relationship between the two groups.
- Rosie Creek forestry roads have great potential as recreational trails, but they are unsigned and confusing to navigate.
  - large map kiosk, online map, and directional signs.
- Steeper sections of the roads are beginning to erode.
  - Grading and resurfacing the existing forestry roads.
Solving some problems, continued

- Parking is inadequate to access the Rosie Creek forestry road system.
  - Removing junk cars & grading a DOF material site for a trailhead,
  - Parking provided for large vehicles and trailers for ATVs and snowmachines.

- Motorized vehicles can get stuck and cause erosion to trails and wetlands when they cross wet areas that should only be used for winter travel.
  - Signage indicating "winter use only" will help travelers make better decisions.

- Some unauthorized use of Mental Health Trust Land, private land occurs in conjunction with recreational use of TVSF forest roads.
  - Signage indicating where users enter and leave public lands, and what uses are allowed there.
Schedule for RTP award cycle

- **November 22, 2019**: Application due date. [done!]
- **December 30, 2019**: Qualified applications are sent to the Outdoor Recreational Trails Advisory Board (ORTAB) for review.
- **January 22 & 23, 2020**: ORTAB meets in Anchorage for final scoring of qualified applications.
- **February, 2020**: Applications that have been recommended for award are forwarded to FHWA for review.
- **March through June, 2020**: Award and grant agreements are signed and implemented.
Summary

- Rosie Creek project will demonstrate how recreation and forestry interests can work together to provide long-term benefits for each.

- Proposed recreational improvements benefit residents and visitors alike:
  - beauty of a northern boreal forest,
  - gorgeous views of the Tanana Valley and the Alaska Range.

- The Fairbanks economy also benefits:
  - visitors could rent mountain bikes, cross-country skis, ATVs or snowmachines,
  - spend a few extra days in hotels and restaurants in the area.
Thanks to:

- Board of Forestry for initiating this project, and especially Chris Beck for inspiring us.
- Chris Maisch & Tim Dabney for supporting the project.
- Jeremy Douse for help with mapping, driving an ATV, scouting the trails, writing the land use permit, and answering a hundred questions.
- Jon Underwood, on the TVSF CAC, for helping scout the trail and getting estimates for construction and maintenance work.
- Geoff Orth, with Stray Dogs, for helping with the budget and getting Interior Alaska Trails and Parks Foundation on board.
- Ed Soto and Paul Keech, for advice about budgets and DOF responsibilities.
- The Rosie Creek neighborhood and the community of Fairbanks, for being excited about trails in general, and being open to more trail users in their backyard.